



**Community Meeting #2**  
**Proposed Co-location of Hirsch High School and Art In Motion Charter School**

**January 16, 2018**  
**Hirsch High School, 7740 S. Ingleside**  
**6:00 – 8:00 p.m.**

**CPS Staff in Attendance:**

Karen Saffold, Mary Bradley, Chasda Martin, Laura Farr, Pat (Communications)

**CPS Presentation:**

Karen Saffold opened the meeting and provided the introduction to other CPS staff and basic logistics of the meeting. Karen indicated that she and Mary were here on behalf of Acting CEO Janice Jackson. She also indicated that this was an opportunity for Dr. Jackson hear the community input on the proposal. Attendees were encouraged to sign up to speak, and those that who did not wish to speak in this setting, but still had questions to submit those questions from [transitions@cps.edu](mailto:transitions@cps.edu). The presentation was transitioned to Mary Bradley.

Mary Bradley provided an overview of the approved Art In Motion Charter School proposal, community efforts to date and what potential benefits of co-location could be. Mary transitioned the presentation over to Karen.

Karen reviewed the logistics of public participation, including allowing elected officials to speak and then logistics for public participation.

Karen acknowledged the principal who stood in recognition.

Karen introduced Mr. Brunson.

There were approximately 60 individuals present for the meeting.

**Michael Brunson:** Announced himself as Recording Secretary for CTU. He indicated that they are opposed to the co-location just as they are opposed to the closing of Englewood schools. He recognized that he spoke before and didn't want to repeat what he said earlier but he acknowledged there were new people present so he proceeded to speak. He stated that all the money flows to the top for charter schools and that when Art In Motion is being referred to its really Distinctive Schools. He stated he was not going into a lot of detail because he had already done so but noted their questionable history. He indicated he was going to make sure that information is published. He is

concerned that CPS is going to be in another scandal with this operator. He mentioned the scandal in 2009 with selective enrollment and 2015 with our CEO. He stated that the charter will co-locate and start out with 200 students and move up to 900 students and that the capacity of the building is 1100 students. He called it a slow take over and questioned why two separate schools were being put together to begin with. He stated one will have resources and the other will not, and called it segregation. He stated segregation does not work with black people. And acknowledged that the speakers at the meeting are talking to each other while CPS is just taking notes, not addressing questions or concerns. He stated that the big meeting will be the one at Central Office and all the Hirsch parents need to be at that meeting and make their voice heard. He questioned why CPS is supporting a segregation policy in its own schools. He stated that the problem with Hirsch is the resources and if this other group wants to come in to help this community and this school then they should contribute to the resources. He stated charter schools are not paying their workers and don't have a voice in the educational environment. He closed by stating he would be here for a while, and asked the community to demand that the notes and transcripts be made available.

Karen proceeded to speak with calling #1-5 and reiterated the two minute time limit, along with asking speakers to state their first and last name and their affiliation to Hirsch.

JS, a student: The student had two questions for the audience: why haven't we seen you before now and why haven't you helped us in four years. The student stated they like their school at Hirsch. The student stated that putting two schools together, may be an issue because students watch each other and parents may not agree with what the students are seeing.

Jessica: Teacher at Distinctive Schools. She spoke from the perspective of a parent. She is involved in her young child's life and they reside on the south side. She acknowledged the amount of traveling they do to get their student to a lot of resources that she enjoys. She stated as a working parent that is difficult and expressed her support for the merging of the two schools for resources that students deserve. She stated that students should feel trusted and supportive, active and engaged. She acknowledged Distinctive and AIM as good resources for our students and stated it is about the students.

AA, a student: Student stated that Hirsch may seem like a bad school but it isn't. She questioned the money the church says they have and that Hirsch just needs more activities. The student asked not to be kicked out of the school they have because they will have nowhere else to go and that there will be a lot of drop outs.

Amy Brickhart: Distinctive Schools staff that talked about performing arts. She proceeded to tell her story about her parents' immigration to Chicago and how performing arts helped her through her education and her experiences. The arts informed what she pursued in college and taught her collaboration with people, and

groups. It also taught her how to read, have fun, collaboration and confidence in myself and she acknowledged that she hoped that for the future of AIM.

Speaker 5 called to the podium but did not respond.

Speakers 6-10 were called to the podium.

Speaker: Staff member at Distinctive Schools here to provide additional information. The speaker indicated that they Joined Distinctive this summer because of what it stands for and because of its mission. The speaker acknowledged that many perspectives and sides would be shared during the meeting and proceeded to share their pride of Distinctive, indicating that they stand for generosity and love and that they take care of family members, students and staff. The speaker indicated their full support for AIM.

MG, student: The student asked why is there another school in our school and why can't Hirsch be rejuvenated? The student cited the need for more funding and that they have no clubs because they are underfunded. He acknowledged that some students don't have anywhere else to go and that those students will be uneducated and will not have any of the advantages that the other school will have.

Speaker: Staff member at Distinctive Schools, Instructional Coach. Stated that personalized learning attracted them to Distinctive Schools and that this was something that was not seen in the previous schools they taught at. Typically students come from various backgrounds and learning styles and it is difficult to meet them where they are at. The speaker acknowledged that when they arrived at Distinctive I was able to incorporate that into the classroom. Students were able to tap into and find out what they really wanted to do because they had experience outside of the classroom. The speaker proceeded to state that students are at the forefront at Distinctive Schools.

Sam: Not affiliated with Hirsch or Distinctive. Played ball with Dallas Mavericks. He acknowledged that at the end of the day it is about the young adults. He proceeded to tell his story of attending Amundsen instead of Senn because that's what his mother wanted and stated that he does not believe there is anything wrong with finding an alternative way for education to meet students' different learning styles. It is about the students. He asked the crowd if they can all just get along and figure out how to best serve the community.

Numbers 11-16 were asked to come to the podium.

Maria: Serves as a member of the community, the LSC and director of student council. She acknowledged peoples comments being all about the kids and asked why CPS would continue to keep Hirsch if they are not provided with the appropriate resources. She stated she has no doubt that Distinctive has well intentions for their own students but no one has talked about Hirsch students. She asked why money given to where it belongs? She stated that it is all about the children and as a tax payer she should be

able to state where she wants the money to be used. She stated that the money should be put where our mouths are and called for alternative programming.

Dr. Karen Ratliff: Previous community member and board member at Hirsch. She proceeded to address questions about where New Life has been. She proceeded to state that the church has been there and has always supported Hirsch, including \$184,000 over the last three years. New Life has supported computer labs, gym renovations, and student uniforms. She acknowledged that it has always been about the community, they support the community and Hirsch students.

Mary: Community Partner here at Hirsch. Facilitate a restorative justice class. She expressed her emotions over the fighting over our children. She shared her tragedy of her own child being killed near the school in 2012 and how she has volunteered since then. She proceeded to question where New Life has been since that time and stated that they've never walked the halls, tutored or mentored these students or volunteered even after she asked. She asked for investment in these students because they are hurting. She wants to build together on what's been established. Speaker: The speaker stated they have three students that attend Hirsch and that they know how it goes to be transitioned: it is a bunch of lies. She acknowledged that she is experiencing this at another school and that she is going to fight to the end for this school.

Jay: Outreach coordinator. Acknowledged that the social issues cannot be resolved until the students are brought to the table and they understand what impacts them. With all of the fighting, student voices cannot be heard.

Speaker: Representative from UIC that serves a data driven program in the neighborhood. He stated that the data is low for the students that want to go to Hirsch. He acknowledged he is a member of the Grand Crossing and Avalon communities and told the Hirsch students that they will get pushed out, what is brought here will be here for them. He stated there have been other things that haven't worked and that this should be given a try.

Joseph Butler: Community resident and been a part of this process before. He stated he was frustrated and a little concerned because of the way the community has been engaged. He acknowledged he was at another meeting having this same conversation, talking about the benefits of bringing AIM to Hirsch. He stated that engagement starts right now when the young people are brought into this role. He acknowledged that everyone is invested in what is important and that the fighting needs to be put aside AIM, and Hirsch, to work together to leverage voices and hold CPS accountable. He stated power and energy need to be harnessed together to impact.

Speakers 19-25 were called to the podium.

David Vance: He stated that he knows about co-locations and that the parents and LSC at Corliss and at Bowen High School need to be spoken to. He stated that they suffered, their marquee was removed and it took it three years to get it back. He stated that they

don't care about your school and that people have to fight and go all the way. He acknowledged that some people in the neighborhood are still asleep and he didn't know why. The community is already surrounded by charter schools. He stated that is about what CPS can get out of your school. Don't let them take your school.

Keiana: Teacher at Distinctive Schools and parent of a young black boy. She expressed her desire to be passionate about her student's resources and his future. She stated that Distinctive and AIM strive to bring that passion back to the community, that students having a say in learning and extracurricular activities, it is about collaboration and joining forces.

Ivone Brown: Member of New Life and educator at Distinctive Schools and a mother. She provided her perspective on why AIM is a good choice for the community: they are starting at 7<sup>th</sup> grade and they have Arts Based Focused curriculum will build connections for students.

Ronald Banks: AIM Board Member. He wanted to know the questions Hirsch students have so he can answer the questions. One student asked why we are just hearing about this. Someone else asked him who he was and how he was elected. Mr. Banks stated that he was a business owner and that he's known about this for 3 years. He stated he was asked to be a part of the Board.

Additional speakers were called up to the podium.

Michael Brunson: Acknowledged more people speaking from Distinctive schools than AIM and stated they stepped up their game but that It's still all about Distinctive Schools. He stated people are always coming in saying that they are for the students and proposed the following question: "if AIM is so loving, caring and giving why do you have to take over now. If you want these students so much why don't you ask them what they want."

Speaker: I am a community member and parent of a 13 year old. The speaker stated they travel very far to get resources that should be available to all students. They stated that AIM opens up this community to new arrivals.

Ms. Miller: Speaking on behalf of a community person, teaching professional and business owner. She acknowledged that speakers are speaking with emotion and we don't really respond the way they should. She continued to state that she wondered where the students who were sitting in these seats are now: judges, business owners, teachers, and others that look like her. Football, basketball players, movie stars, musicians, etc. Those are the people they should want. She stated she was on the right side because she speak the truth. Everyone is not going to college but they are going to be productive citizens. The choice is yours.

Speaker: Community member and parent. One thing that concerned the speaker are good school choices. The speaker expressed their support for AIM because they don't have good choices in this community.

Ms. McNeal: Distinctive schools educator. Spoke about her son, his love for drawing and music and how AIM may be an option for her student, because selective enrollment may not be. Acknowledged that they travel far to get to her son's activities. She recognized that a Hirsch student had a question

Maria Owens: Spoke again to debunk the lies that were told. She stated that this organization has not been a part of this school structure for the last seven years. She dared New Life to state what programs they funded for Hirsch HS and stated that if they were a part of the fabric then they would be talking to Hirsch teachers and students. She stated that they could have all the things stated if they were just given the money.

Terence: I am an educator at Distinctive and asked to share his experience. He's been teaching for 23 years, went to the school in the Englewood community, graduated from Dunbar, mentored at a church and Distinctive. He's worked with a lot of boys and his primary concern are these young brothers. He stated that an arts education may have made a difference with these students. He stated he sees lots of young men who are diverse learners, not academically strong and the arts have helped them.

Cece Edwards: President of Grand Crossing Park advisory council. She stated that she lived in this area since she was five years old and acknowledged Hirsch as a historic institution. He highlighted the lack of parent support for activities and resources they were fighting for in the park. She stated that the principal was good and New Life came to help her with resources for students. She stated that this place should be packed with parents and that AIM has a plan to be a public charter. She also stated that the community should say what they want it to be like but she believes they will work with the young people there and stated that an art school here would be excellent here to co-relate.

Additional speakers were called.

Shatunda: She thanked Principal Varn for taking care of her grandson from Iowa. She stated she was a veteran teacher whose school was closed in 2002. She's been attending these meetings for 17 years and it's the same. She stated there is nothing AIM can do that Hirsch can't do. She highlighted that she became a science teacher because of lacking of funding for a music teacher and that veteran teachers at Hirsch deserve better. She pointed out that educators work in difficult conditions with difficult students and this is how they are repaid. She stated that this can't continue to happen and that the community needs to be together. She expressed her love and gratitude to the teachers. Speaker: here from New Life but represent arts. The speaker mentored a talented student who now attends a private arts school because there were no high school options locally. The speaker doesn't want to limit the arts being brought into this community and stated that there are a lot of students that are artistically talented. He stated that the arts deserve to be on the south side for a high school and also stated that if they can have it on the west side why can't it also be on the south side. Consider the arts.

Speaker: Stated that AIM is actually a really great program. The speaker is an artist that grew up in Englewood. Criminal justice was his focus but he wasn't passionate about it. He acknowledged that there are a lot of talented students out there that are into art and this is a good option for them.

Mary Long: Spoke again about her volunteer efforts and the engagement with New Life that led to no volunteers from the church for the students. She also questioned why the proposal was being considered if there was scandal surrounding it. She asked if Hirsch could be supported. Adrienne Leonard: Acknowledged that she spoke last week and shared her actions of conducting focus groups and a listening campaign with various stakeholders. She stated that she is with the students and is inviting them to hear what they have to say. She invited the students and other community members to do focus groups.

Principal Varn and other speakers were announced.

Principal Varn: He introduced himself and asked the students in attendance to stand with him. He recognized representation from Ald. Harris' Office, Karen Saffold and Mary Bradley. Acknowledged MLK celebration and recognized it as a celebration of equality. He told the students that they've been robbed, that someone has taken their rights from them and left them with no more than a basic education. He stated that he felt bad because all that he is able to give the students is what they need to receive a HS diploma, although he desires to give them more than that because that's what they deserve. He stated that Hirsch was not always like this, it has not always been at this level of desperate bottom of the barrel educational opportunities. He stated with more school choice Hirsch has suffered. Used the analogy of rent and addressed Dr. Ratliff stating that Hirsch offers a building where you pay rent. He stated his appreciation for her because they filled in a gap that CPS could not. He stated he appreciates the 180,000 but that it is not much and that New Life has never said no to Hirsch. He stated that when the proposal did not go through the first time he asked New Life to partner with Hirsch: they would provide the academics and New Life the arts. He never received a response. He also stated that CPS has said is that they will not give capital dollars to improve Hirsch's building; CPS has already said they are not giving us anything. He asked the question of where a co-location really worked in a high school and stated that he has not received a solid answer on this. He stated maybe there's a chance where this can be the model co-location but there must be the proper investment in both schools. He further stated that Hirsch got sick, their vitals fell and they started hemorrhaging students and that they are under CPS. Now they are on life support and if nothing is done to Hirsch we will die. He stated that they are a part of CPS so that means that the classes AIM offers will not be offered to Hirsch students. It can't happen because Hirsch is a part of CPS. He stated that before and after school activities are great but most important is what happens during the school day and that AIM can't help them with that. He asked where CPS was and that they should give Hirsch what it needs and to not create a school of inequality.

3 additional speakers were called to the podium.

Mr. Brown: Member of New Life and servant of the community. He stated that he's walked the Hirsch halls and mentored 10 9<sup>th</sup> graders who put the mural that is in Hirsch, the only one that is in Hirsch. He stated change is rough but it's on the horizon and that this is a simple request for co-location. He stated that AIM is still coming to Grand Crossing, even if it's not located at Hirsch. He stated that if the co-location is denied New Life will still exist and a charter will still come to Grand Crossing.

Brian Mullens: Lifelong community member and spoke against the co-location. He acknowledged it's a part of the larger scheme of things and that this move will lead to closing Hirsch HS. He stated that people should not act like it's a secret. He stated the community should look at what this is doing to the community at a larger scale. He stated that it always starts with the arts and leads to gentrification. He is against the co-location.

Speaker: Educator, Math Teacher and supporter of AIM. He acknowledged that schools have not caught up to the change of the world. He stated the purpose of AIM is to meet students at their level. Students' curiosity burns in these environments and students learn what they are really passionate about. He is really excited for the opportunity for AIM to bring personalized learning and the arts together and stated that being able to navigate the world is going to be necessary for our students.

Chatunda: Stated that she is a co-chair of the CAC and has been involved in CPS many years. She is writing a book on education and cited research that charters are no different from district schools, the only difference, she stated, is the color of the teachers. She indicated that 132,000 teachers have been terminated because of the proliferation of charter schools and further stated that those teachers are not certified and do not have the credentials to be in front of these students. She stated they are not succeeding. She stated that she was a musician and that she fundraised for music at Kenwood for many years because CPS would not fund it. She told the audience to support the principals and the teachers and demand that CPS fund us.

An additional speaker was announced.

Speaker: Acknowledged that it was hot in the building and acknowledged that this is a stressful situation. He spoke last week and asked people to be curious about the conversation and asked the audience to consider where they stand on the situation. He asked if anyone did the work of last week and requested that people do more research and you're their homework. He stated that people should check on the other side to see what the possibility of co-location could actually be: could these students actually elevate their knowledge. He told the audience to take the opportunity, one of the best things about being an American is that we get choice.

Chasda acknowledged that there were about 10 minutes left and invited speakers to speak again if they'd like.



Karen reiterated that participants can submit additional concerns/questions to [transitions@cps.edu](mailto:transitions@cps.edu) if there were any additional questions and also acknowledged that there is still time available to speak.

Attendees began to leave the auditorium, Karen did stress to that the floor was still open and that there were nine minutes remaining if anyone had any additional concerns or comments.

Attendees continued to prepare to exit and congregate/socialize on their way out.

Karen proceeded to remind those still in the auditorium that there were four minutes remaining before 8:00 pm and anyone still interested in speaking could do so.

At 8:00 pm Karen acknowledged that the meeting was closed.